

RECORDS OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FROM 1680 what ultimately became the Reformed Presbyterian Church held business convocations known as "General Meetings." Minutes of these were prepared and copies were apparently sent to various localities, where they were probably recopied and again distributed. John Howie's *Faithful Contendings* (1780) is largely an account of the proceedings between 1681 and 1691, collected and recorded by Michael Shields, who acted as Clerk.

The General Meeting was continued to the middle of the eighteenth century, when, after the formation of the Reformed Presbytery, on August 1, 1743, it gradually ceased to function, though it met as late as 1762, at least. The minute-books of the opening years of the newly constituted Presbytery have disappeared. All that remains is an unofficial record of its first meeting, which is contained in the Rev. Thomas Nairn's *Short Account of the Constitution and some of the Proceedings of the Reformed Presbytery*, Glasgow, 1745, printed as a preface to "A Sermon preached at Braehead at the Ordination of Mr Thomas Marshall, November 15, 1744"—the first probationer of the Church. It is supposed that the records were carried off by the dissentient members of Presbytery, who separated from the Macmillans in 1753.¹

After the disruption of the Presbytery the orthodox party met as occasion required. No minutes of their gatherings are available till 1758, and it is therefore apparent that more have disappeared than those appropriated by the seceders. From 1758 to 1876, when the Reformed Presbyterian Church united with the Free Church of Scotland, the records are fairly complete, only occasional gaps occurring. The following lists indicate the more important hiatuses. The books are preserved in the Library of the New College, Edinburgh.

GENERAL MEETING

1. "Conclusions" of various dates: *e.g.*, Dec. 15, 1691–Aug. 20, 1724; Feb. 8, 1693–Aug. 3, 1719 (in handwriting of Dr John Cunningham, died 1872); Feb. 8, 1693–April 4, 1743; 1693–1729; 1693–1742; 1725–1760 (with index by Rev. J. H. Thomson).

¹ Cf. *Records*, I. 1–28.

2. An Historical Relation of the State and Actings of the Suffering Remnant . . . from 1681 to 1690, etc. By Michael Shields (in author's manuscript).
[The Wodrow MSS. in the National Library of Scotland have another MS. of the General Meeting Minutes.]
3. Minutes of Kirkcudbright Presbytery relating to Rev. John Macmillan, Balmaghie, August 20, 1700–October 1, 1717 (copy).

I. THE PRESBYTERY, 1757–1810

1. 1758–June 14, 1762. [Scroll minutes: several leaves at beginning amissing.]
2. February 9, O.S., 1758–February 15, 1760.
3. May 17, 1762–April 20, 1768.
4. June 13, 1768–June 7, 1779.
5. July 5, 1779–March 5, 1788.
6. May 7, 1788–March 7, 1810. [No. 6 is indexed up to November 22, 1799, by Rev. J. H. Thomson.]

The Dissident Presbytery, October 21, 1761–August 12, 1816.

II. SYNOD, 1811–1876

A. *Manuscript*

1. May 1, 1811–Nov. 27, 1822. (In I. 6.)
2. May 1, 1811–May 9, 1822. (Transcribed.)
3. May 1823–April 1832.
4. February 1833–May 1840.
5. October 1840–May 1858.
6. May 1859–March 1883.
7. March 11, 1884–March 9, 1897.

B. *Printed*

1. May 1824–February 1833.
2. May 1834–May 1858.
3. May 1834–May 1876.
4. May 1870–February 1927.

[Full reports of the minutes and the sectional reports of special committees are given year by year in the *Scottish Presbyterian Magazine*, 1835–1854, and in the *Reformed Presbyterian Magazine*, 1855–1876.]

III

In 1810 the Synod was divided into three Presbyteries—

A. North-Eastern

1. May 2, 1810–May 15, 1834.

B. Western

1. May 2, 1810–July 21, 1830.

C. Southern

1. May 2, 1810–February 21, 1826.
2. April 12, 1826–July 15, 1834.

IV

In 1834 the Presbyteries were re-arranged into five Presbyteries. From 1840 to 1843, Kilmarnock and Newton-Stewart were united ; and Dumfries and Newton-Stewart from 1868 to 1876.

A. Edinburgh

1. June 4, 1834–July 7, 1841.
2. July 28, 1841–October 30, 1855.
3. January 13, 1856–December 11, 1857.

In 1863 certain ministers separated from the majority in consequence of a vote on the question of the Elective Franchise, and the then Clerk of the Presbytery, Rev. William Anderson, Loanhead, being of the minority, retained the above three volumes. As a consequence of correspondence between him and the new Clerk he wrote as follows : “ December 28, 1863,—Without in the slightest degree affecting the claims, rights or privileges of either party, I believe that our Presbytery will be happy at any time convenient to afford you and the parties whom you represent an opportunity of examining these books and taking any excerpts therefrom you may deem necessary.” The three volumes are in the possession of the now Reformed Presbyterian Church.

4. May 8, 1863–February 11, 1873.
5. May 6, 1873–May 24, 1876.

B. Glasgow

1. June 4, 1834–April 9, 1850.
2. April 29, 1850–October 26, 1875.
3. January 11, 1876–May 25, 1876.

C. Paisley

1. June 4, 1834–May 4, 1876.

D. Kilmarnock

1. June 4, 1834–September 5, 1843.
2. March 27, 1849–August 3, 1859.
3. August 3, 1859–January 27, 1874.
4. April 7, 1874–May 23, 1876.

E. Dumfries

1. May 19, 1837–February 1, 1860.
2. February 16, 1860–March 13, 1877.

F. Newton-Stewart

The Presbytery of Newton-Stewart, because of its smallness, was united with the Presbytery of Kilmarnock from October 1840 to July 1843 ; and with that of Dumfries from August 1867 to March 1877. The minutes of the United Presbyteries are recorded in the volumes of these Presbyteries.

1. July 15, 1834–May 16, 1837 (contained in III. c. 2).
2. May 19, 1837–June 29, 1857.
3. October 13, 1857–November 1866.

V. MISCELLANEOUS MINUTES

- I. Foreign Missions—1. August 13, 1838–May 6, 1845.
2. June 23, 1845–April 8, 1858.
3. February 16, 1858–February 29, 1876.
- II. Ministerial Support—December 8, 1846–May 18, 1875.
- III. Proposed Union with Free and United Presbyterian Churches—1864–1873.
- IV. Home Missions—1. June 3, 1856–December 27, 1865.
2. February 8, 1866–December 5, 1876.

V. Jewish Mission—August 6, 1844–May 5, 1857.

VI. Divinity Hall—July 9, 1846–July 29, 1870.

VII. Matriculation Album of Divinity Hall—1805–1875.

In addition to these Records the archives of the Presbytery contain autograph letters of Sir Robert Hamilton, Michael and Alexander Shields, James Renwick, John Macmillan (I), Rev. John Fairley, etc., along with Reports, Notes of Sermons, the Ferguson Bequest Fund Litigation, Causes of Fasting, etc., etc.